



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
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### **State Health Department Reports Rubella Case** *Case Highlights the Importance of Vaccinations*

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) today reported the first case of rubella, also known as German measles, in North Dakota since 1991, according to Molly Sander, Immunization Program manager for the Department of Health.

Late last week, the NDDoH was notified of an adult male Cass County resident who had a rash illness. Early this week, laboratory tests confirmed the illness as rubella. The individual has an unknown history of vaccination and recently traveled to India, where he likely contracted the illness.

“As this case illustrates, many vaccine-preventable diseases are only a plane ride away. That’s why vaccinations are so very important,” Sander said. “Vaccinations are the safest and most effective way that people can protect themselves and their children from rubella and other diseases like measles and polio. The Department of Health strongly encourages all North Dakotans to make sure they and their children are up-to-date with all vaccinations.”

The NDDoH is in the process of contacting North Dakota residents who were potentially exposed to this rubella case via air travel or identified by the case as a close contact to ensure that they all have a history of rubella vaccination or immunity due to past infection and that no other contacts have developed a rash. Other states have been notified and will contact their residents who may have been affected due to close contact or air travel.

Although rubella is usually a mild disease, it can be severe in some cases. If a woman contracts rubella during pregnancy, the disease can cause severe complications to the fetus, such as miscarriage, fetal death, or birth defects. In 1964 and 1965, before rubella immunization was used routinely in the United States, there was an epidemic of rubella that resulted in an estimated

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20,000 infants born with congenital rubella syndrome (CRS); 2,100 neonatal deaths; and 11,250 miscarriages. Of the 20,000 infants born with CRS, 11,600 were deaf; 3,580 were blind; and 1,800 were mentally retarded.

The immunization for rubella is contained in MMR vaccine, which is required for all children attending day cares, schools and colleges in North Dakota. Immunity, whether by natural infection or vaccination, is especially important in pregnant women or people in close contact with pregnant individuals because of the serious effect the rubella virus can have on an unborn child. Vaccination of a susceptible pregnant woman should be done after her baby is born, as the rubella vaccine cannot be given during pregnancy.

For more information, contact Molly Sander at 701.328.2378 or toll-free at 800.472.2180.

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